

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A product design server system which forms the heart of a design-to-order product community. The design-to-order product community is an on-line community that provides a dynamic environment in which community participants can interact on the fly and instantaneously respond to product changes. The architecture of the product design server system, and the special product definition data structure utilized thereby, is network-based (e.g., web-based). The product design server system of the present invention goes beyond web-enabled and IP-based architectures by providing a pure internet architecture approach. Interaction with the product definition data, and thus participation in the design-to-order product community, is enabled through browser-based application service suites. These application service suites, described subsequently in more detail, enable community participants, as individuals or teams, to use a standard web browser to create, find, access, understand, manipulate, and publish product information (e.g., the product definition data 60) to enhance their unique roles in the product lifecycle.